

MIDDLE EAST

The end of the Camp David era

WHAT NEXT?

The resignation of General Moshe Dayan from his post as Foreign Minister of Israel on Oct. 21 has not only plunged the Israeli government into crisis, but bares before the eyes of the world the abject failure of U.S. policy in the Middle East. Dayan, more than any other Israeli, symbolized the Camp David treaty, and his resignation from Menachem Begin's government symbolizes the fact that the Egyptian-Israeli pact contained in the Camp David framework has come to a dead end.

The Dayan resignation will lead to a rapid unraveling of the American-Israeli strategy in the Middle East. Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski virtually imposed Dayan on Prime Minister-elect Begin following his stunning electoral upset-victory in May, 1977. It was Vance and Brzezinski who dispatched Rabbi Alexander Schindler, then-President of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, to Jerusalem to urge Begin to bring Dayan into the Cabinet, in order that Begin's government, already tinged with an extremist character, not appear entirely unpalatable. Then, it was Dayan, upon being appointed, who traveled to a series of secret meetings with Egyptian officials that eventually led to the Camp David Summit in Sept. 1978.

The Carter administration has virtually admitted that the Camp David framework has collapsed. U.S. Special Ambassador Robert Strauss, who is charged with representing the United States at the Egyptian-Israeli talks on Palestinian autonomy, stated bluntly that he does not expect the U.S., Israel, and Egypt to be able to put together a formula acceptable even to a moderate fraction of the Palestinian population. "I have reason to believe that we will complete the work assigned to us," declared Strauss, who added that he hopes only that Jordan and the Palestinians will be "leaning over our shoulder" by the time the May, 1980, deadline draws near. Then, in a statement to a House subcommittee, Strauss was even more pessimistic, ad-

mitting that between Egypt and Israel, "not one single iota of an agreement" has been reached that he could cite as a potential success. This admission, which hit several capitals like a bombshell, can only be seen as the obituary for the Camp David process.

What is at stake is the entire policy outlook that, since the October 1973 Middle East war, has dominated the U.S. administration and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). For Carter, the Egypt-Israeli pact has been portrayed by media men as the triumphant and most important foreign policy achievement of his tenure as chief of state. For the CFR and for NATO strategists, the Camp David pact was much more: it was the cornerstone for construction of a vast new military alliance across the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the "Middle East Treaty Organization," in which the NATO allies would work through surrogates for the control of the oil resources of the Persian Gulf. That strategy—reiterated by Sen. Henry Jackson on Oct. 21—is still desired by a major faction of the Anglo-American establishment, but because of the firm opposition from Western Europe, the Arab world, and the Soviet Union, Camp David can no longer serve as the vehicle for it.

Once again, the Middle East is up for grabs. The Americans are groping for a new—or newly packaged—policy. By mid-November, the member states of the Arab League will convene a summit meeting to discuss the next phase of the Arab strategy, probably in conjunction with Western Europe. There are rumors of a major new European initiative to bring the Palestine Liberation Organization into the picture. That, according to European sources, is in turn part of a package-deal involving tighter European-Arab economic and financial ties, which would include a closer integration of the European Monetary System with the resources of the Arab oil-producing countries.

In the short term, the resignation of Dayan will lead

to a rise of tensions in the Middle East, especially along the Lebanese and Syrian border. Deprived of its "moderate" anchor, the Begin government is expected to drift sharply to the right in order to preserve the coalition. In particular, the new Renaissance Party led by physicist Yuval Neeman gained momentum in recent weeks, and many of Begin's supporters are being drafted toward Neeman's bloc. Neeman has adopted an extremist position in favor of outright annexation of the occupied territories, including the Sinai peninsula, and the cancellation of the Camp David accords.

But the Carter administration and the Anglo-American faction is now confronted with a deep dilemma. With its Middle East policy in shambles, the Americans and the British are, for the first time, in danger of losing control over the policy-developments in the area to a coalition of Arab and European partners backed by the Soviet Union. It is that dilemma, and its implications, that we examine in this section.

Camp David post mortem

What happened to Camp David?

The strategy itself was based on a fundamental miscalculation. When the Carter administration and the British engineered the separate Egypt-Israel treaty, they did so with the mistaken expectation that the voiced opposition from moderate Arab countries such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia would disappear, and that King Hussein and the Saudi royal family would eventually join in, bringing at least some Palestinians with them. Not only did that not occur, but so far the negotiators have been unable to induce even a single Palestinian representative to join in the talks.

Second, although Washington did not immediately expect Western Europe to rejoice in support of Camp David, the almost complete refusal of the Europeans to back the separate Egyptian-Israeli peace had not been predicted by the Camp David architects. The reason is clear: from the start, Camp David was calculated by the Anglo-Americans as a challenge to the Arabs, and implicitly to OPEC. Hence, any European support for the treaty would have been taken by the Arabs as a sign of outright hostility. Europe, especially France and West Germany, was certainly not willing to risk its delicate and important strategic relations with the Arabs because of American pressure to support Camp David.

Since Camp David, in fact, the Europeans have taken giant strides in establishing a close working relationship with the Arabs. On the financial level, the European Monetary System is cooperating closely with the Arabs to hammer out the details of a new world monetary system linked to gold. Meanwhile, the European governments are working with the Arab oil-producing countries to increase the level of state-to-state oil sales and oil-for-technology deals that, for the most part, bypass the multinational oil companies. Finally,

France, Ireland, Spain, and the European Community as a whole have taken major steps toward official recognition of the PLO; should Europe recognize the PLO, it would be a break with American policy in NATO unprecedented since World War II.

With each passing day that the sterile Egypt-Israel pact sits there, unable to attract even passing Arab interest, the United States loses more friends both in Europe and the Middle East.

So, the CFR and its Carter administration are forced to choose between two unpalatable—for them—alternatives.

On the one hand, there is a powerful faction which demands a military showdown with the Arabs and the Soviet Union to break resistance to Camp David. They advocate that Israel escalate tension along the Syrian

**A Zionist tells the Zionists
to return to Geneva.**

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border, in the context of a massive U.S. military buildup in the region. Led by such spokesmen as Alexander Haig and Henry Kissinger, this faction is prepared for an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with the USSR in the Middle East. But more level-headed and realistic policy makers in the CFR clique are aware that such a scenario is likely to lead either to World War III or to a humiliating U.S. backdown in which Soviet troops and armor backing the Arabs would hand Israel a stunning defeat.

On of the other hand, gradually surfacing is a somewhat larger faction of the CFR which believes that it is necessary for the whole Camp David pact to be superseded by some more comprehensive policy that includes, inter alia, a near total withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Arab territories and the establishment of some kind of Palestinian "homeland." But the question that this faction—which includes the traditional "Arabists" and patricians such as George Ball—is unable to answer, is: Once such a process is begun, can the Anglo-American bloc maintain control over the end result, or will the Europeans and the Arabs simply seize control of the Middle East mechanism? If the latter, it is clearly not an acceptable alternative, from their point of view.

Nevertheless, it appears as if, sooner or later, Washington may have to adjust to that reality. At present, the State Department and most of the CFR

policy establishment have decided to stall for time.

To accomplish that objective, and to draw attention away from the failure of Camp David, State Department special envoy Philip Habib will arrive in the region this week to set into motion a new American initiative over Lebanon. That crisis, which worsened again last week, is to be discussed with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, along with the Vatican, with the State Department seeking some roundtable discussion among all parties to the dispute. If that can be set up—which is extremely unlikely—then the U.S. hopes to turn it into a kind of “Camp David north,” in which Syria and Jordan can be set against the PLO by offering them partial Israeli withdrawals from the Golan Heights and the West Bank.

Another initiative is that of John Connally, who proposed a comprehensive plan for a peace settlement based on nothing more than naked American military power, a string of U.S. bases in the area, a new Indian Ocean fleet, and so forth. The sheer scope of the Connally plan (see below), which he has made into the basis of a Presidential campaign fight, indicates that it is designed to serve as a discussion paper for a Middle East policy that can replace Camp David, which Connally says bluntly is incapable of bringing the area to the next phase because of Arab opposition.

And finally, there is Moshe Dayan. Dayan, who is Israel's most sophisticated politician, has been exploring alternatives to the present form of Camp David for a while; but he is committed to ensuring that whatever policy eventually emerges will be merely a linear extension of the Camp David strategy. On the eve of his resignation, Dayan announced that he would support a unilateral dismantling of the military-government apparatus in the West Bank and Gaza and the establishment of “local police forces” to replace the Israeli troops that now patrol the area, as a carrot to induce resident Palestinians to participate in the autonomy talks. Beneath the surface, however, the pot is boiling in Israeli politics. Things aren't moving in Dayan's direction.

—Robert Dreyfuss

Mideast Institute meet a flight from reality

On October 5 and 6, approximately 800 Middle East specialists, academics, businessmen, and representatives of the intelligence community, gathered together at a Washington hotel to be told what the vast majority of them knew to be a lie: that the Camp David peace approach, “for all its shortcomings,” is still viable, and must, somehow be kept alive.

“I find it unconscionable that President Carter is not getting his due for intervening in securing the Camp David pact,” intoned Hermann Eilts in his keynote address to the conference. Hammering away on this theme, Eilts, former ambassador to Egypt and one of the principal negotiators of the Camp David accords, told the largely bored audience that “without the personal intervention of Jimmy Carter, Camp David never would have happened.” “No president but Carter,” Eilts continued, “has realized the centrality of the Palestinian issue.”

The event at which Eilts was speaking was none other than the 33rd annual conference of the Middle East Institute, entitled “The Middle East After Partial Peace: What Lies Ahead?” The conference's answer to that question was: who knows?

What was remarkable about the conference was not the mere fact that such a large number of top Middle East policymakers had assembled to listen to such drivel. The most striking aspect of the entire affair was the utter bankruptcy of policy being put forth at the conference. Indeed, for the most part, no policy, let alone strategy, was being put forth at all.

To understand what went on at the Middle East Institute conference—and what didn't—it is necessary to understand what, in fact, the Middle East Institute is.

In a nutshell, the Institute was founded at the end of World War II as an outpost of British intelligence in the United States. Formally affiliated with the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University—whose directors proudly describe the Camp David treaty as “a SAIS conspiracy”—the Middle East Institute is also a sister institution of the Ditchley Foundation in London, perhaps Britain's top collection of policymaking aristocrats. The Middle East Institute also operates in coordination with the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, an outgrowth of the Royal Institute for International Affairs and the main policymaker for the Carter administration, and the